

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Cabinet 27 July 2022
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Report title	Levelling Up Wolverhampton	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Ian Brookfield Leader of the Council	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Charlotte Johns, Director of Strategy	
Originating service	Strategy and Policy	
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Report to be/has been considered by	Strategic Executive Board	12 July 2022

Recommendation for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended:

1. To endorse the approach to how the City of Wolverhampton Council is responding to the Levelling Up White Paper, working with key partners including the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to deliver our strategic framework for levelling up, Our City: Our Plan.

Recommendation for noting:

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. That the City of Wolverhampton has been proactively identified by Government as a place with strong local leadership and ambition, where investment can be maximised to catalyse economic transformation.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the city's approach to levelling up, following the UK Government proactively identifying Wolverhampton as a place that demonstrates strong local leadership and ambition, ripe to maximise catalytic economic transformation.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Government published the Levelling Up White Paper on the 3 February 2022, specifically naming the City of Wolverhampton as a priority place for investment into transformational levelling up projects – endorsing the Council's ambitious plans to invest in and further regenerate the city.
- 2.2 Fundamentally, it provides the opportunity to establish an effective partnership between national and local government. We have a clear and ambitious vision for levelling up, as set out in Our City: Our Plan, and major investment opportunities to advance social and economic outcomes.
- 2.3 The City of Wolverhampton Council is ambitious, with strong regional influence and high performing core services. The city has a compelling regeneration vision and strong track record of delivery. The last 10 years have seen major successes, including investment from Jaguar Land Rover, the National Brownfield Institute and most recently the relocation of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to the city in the recently constructed i9 and commercial district.
- 2.4 But more is needed to level up – in terms of development as well as ensuring that regeneration benefits the whole city. Wolverhampton has the right local conditions to activate catalytic investment that enhances local economic activity in the short term and delivers transformational regeneration in the long term. The city is well placed to meet the levelling up challenge.

3.0 Levelling Up Wolverhampton

- 3.1 The city, like many post-industrial places faces long term social and economic challenges. We believe our industrial heritage is an asset to our economy, but it has left a legacy of brownfield sites that present redevelopment challenges. We also face ongoing and new challenges in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, becoming a net carbon neutral city by 2041 and upgrading our digital infrastructure.
- 3.2 A core challenge for the city is its output gap. Despite continual positive growth in gross value added (GVA) per head, Wolverhampton's output gap still remains and was £2.75bn for 2019. To reduce the output gap we will continue to raise skill levels, increase the employment rate with more local people in jobs, and promote the growth and innovation of the business base. In turn this can boost living standards and reduce deprivation, longer-term providing better social, health and environmental outcomes for residents.

3.3 Delivering sustainable improvements in local outcomes relies on getting our economy to work more effectively in ways that involve and empower local communities. Investor confidence and interest in the city continues to grow with £4.4bn of planned investment on site or in the pipeline in the city. It is critical to our levelling up approach that local people continue to benefit from new investment.

4.0 Our City: Our Plan

4.1 Our City: Our Plan is our strategic framework for levelling up, co-produced with over 4500 local people and stakeholders and approved at Full Council on 2 March 2022. We have one plan for our 'place', derived bottom up and collectively owned with clear interface with Levelling Up missions. The plan outlines an overarching ambition that Wulfrunians will live longer, healthier lives, and outlines six priorities.

- Strong families where children grow up well and achieve their full potential
- Fulfilled lives for all with quality care for those that need it
- Healthy, inclusive communities
- Good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods
- More local people into good jobs and training
- Thriving economy in all parts of the city

4.2 Three cross cutting principles support the delivery of the plan – climate conscious, driven by digital and being fair and equal.

4.3 The Council's commercially led Investment Prospectus sets out our spatial framework with comprehensive proposals for the city centre and beyond. High-quality and aspirational physical development is an important element to realise and deliver the priorities of Our City: Our Plan.

5.0 A new relationship

5.1 Levelling up provides an opportunity to reset relationships between national government and local place but this cannot be achieved without fundamental change. To deliver Our City: Our Plan we are seeking:

- Sustainable and sufficient funding for local government in the longer term. The funding requirement is not that which just enables us to bridge the budget gap and stand still, but that which enables levelling up.
- Reducing the fragmentation of funding. Short term funding and the pitching of local authorities against each other in grant funding rounds does not support strategic planning or effective delivery of outcomes.

- Bringing budgets together in place. Tackling fragmented funding to allocate funding to places not departmental silos. Placing emphasis on communities and place by introducing multi-department place-based budgets, explicitly built around the needs of diverse local communities.
- A renewed focus on prevention, backed by government investment. To address existing and future demand for services such as social care, homelessness support and community safety requires investment in lower cost approaches which help strengthen people, communities and local infrastructure.

6.0 Priority Actions

6.1 Developing the city's approach to levelling up will be iterative and shaped through continuous engagement with our communities and partners. A set of initial interventions have been identified as catalyst projects to accelerate levelling up in the city.

6.2 Immediate opportunities

- City Learning Quarter: Delivering a c.£60m state-of-the-art learning hub in the heart of the city co-locating adult education, library and college facilities, supporting more local people into good jobs and training and enabling further housing development.

6.3 Milestones for next 6 to 12 months

- Bilston Health and Regeneration Programme: Delivering town centre improvements and a health, care and wellbeing hub in the heart of one of our most deprived communities that nurtures the integration of NHS, Social Care, Wellbeing and Leisure services to create a campus that empowers local people to take ownership of their own health, to live longer, healthier and more active lives. A Levelling Up Fund Round 2 funding bid is being made for this initiative.
- Green Innovation Corridor – Phase 1: Building on the city's strengths as the National Centre for Sustainable Construction, phase 1 will also stimulate wider regeneration along the corridor by acting as a catalyst for additional private sector investment in the Science Park and unlocking brownfield sites for sustainable and affordable housing provision. A Levelling Up Fund Round 2 funding bid is being made for this initiative.

6.4 Milestones for the next 12 to 24 months

- City Centre Regeneration Programme: Delivering ambitious regeneration projects in our city by creating aspirational, mixed-use city centre community blending living, alongside employment and leisure space. The city centre regeneration programme includes initiatives which will fuel social and economic confidence, drive investment and boost economic growth.

6.5 Milestones for the next 5 years and beyond

- Delivering against one long term integrated investment plan of central, regional, local and private sector funding to deliver Our City: Our Plan.

6.6 To ensure that local people benefit from the growing investment in our city we will continue to tackle our systemic challenges in the city. Working collaboratively across Government departments to explore innovative policy solutions to some of the city's most pressing challenges.

- Education, skills and employment: Redesign the skills and employment system in the city to address longstanding challenges around youth employment and skills.
- Private rented sector housing: Drive up standards and quality of accommodation particularly in supported accommodation which houses some of the city's most vulnerable people.
- Health inequalities: Through our hyper local place-based approach tackle wider determinants of health which impact on the outcomes of local people.

7.0 Governance

7.1 We already have strong relationships with key partners, including the West Midlands Combined Authority, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Homes England. Working with Government will help us to accelerate and expand the opportunities to increase prosperity. It will be important to bring the right partners along on the journey, including bringing in the right private sector investors and developers will increase the capacity, skills and capital to deliver projects and schemes that will enable transformational regeneration in our place.

7.2 As part of the developing government arrangements, it is proposed that the Wolverhampton Towns Fund Board will be refocused to form a City Levelling Up Board.

8.0 Evaluation of alternative

8.1 Option 1: Do nothing.

8.2 Option 2 and the chosen option: Working with key partners including the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to deliver our strategic framework for levelling up, Our City: Our Plan.

9.0 Reasons for decision(s)

9.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the approach to levelling up in the city to ensure a robust strategic framework to realise our ambitions transformation plans and meet the needs and priorities of local people.

10.0 Financial implications

10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Levelling Up projects and programmes that will have financial implications will be subject to individual reports as appropriate.

[MH/15072022/V]

11.0 Legal implications

- 11.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
[SZ/14072022/P]

12.0 Equalities implications

- 12.1 Fair and Equal is one of the three cross cutting principles of Our City: Our Plan. All levelling up activity will be subject to individual equalities analysis.

13.0 All other implications

- 13.1 Levelling up has implications across the Council and city, including climate change, health, and wellbeing and digital.
- 13.2 Health and wellbeing is an important part of everyday life. It is integral to leading a happy and healthy lifestyle. As only 20% of a person's health outcomes are attributed to the ability to access good quality health care, the wider determinants of health, made up of the diverse range of social, economic, and environmental factors which impact on people's health, play a crucial role in the health and wellbeing of communities and local people. Through its focus on these wider determinants the delivery of levelling up will ensure that our communities are stronger, healthier, and thriving places to live.
- 13.3 We will continue to contribute to the delivery of the Council's climate change action plan to meet our commitment to be net carbon neutral as a Council by 2028.
- 13.4 Our levelling up approach is aligned to the Digital Wolves strategy setting out how as a city and as a council we can harness the benefits of digital and technology for local people.

14.0 Schedule of background papers

- 14.1 [Our City: Our Plan](#) – Full Council, 2 March 2022